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Tim Bath | Kokomo Tribune

REPAIRS: Duke Energy prepares to replace the poles and lines on Park Avenue near Boulevard on Thursday.



Tim Bath | Kokomo Tribune

**POWER OUTAGE:** Hundreds of Duke Energy line workers have been dispatched to help restore power.

# Thousands still without power Thursday

## Hundreds of line workers toil through night

**By Rob Burgess**  
**Kokomo Tribune**

Thousands of Duke Energy customers in the Kokomo area were still without power a day after tornadoes once again ripped through the area.

Kevin Johnston is the Duke Energy government and community relations manager for Cass, Fulton, Grant, Howard, Huntington, Kosciusko, Miami, Tipton, Wabash, Wells and Whitley counties. Johnston said the number of outages reached its peak at around 8:45 p.m. Wednesday, when around 31,000 customers in the Kokomo area were without power.

“That’s around 60 percent of our customers there,” he said.

The company has restored service to more than 41,000 customers since the storm hit, according to a Thursday Duke Energy press release.

The company is also contributing \$25,000 to the United Way of Howard County to help with relief efforts.

“In the last 24 hours, I’ve seen firsthand how Kokomo pulls together in a crisis,” stated Johnston. “We are partners in this response.”

By comparison, 45,000 was the estimated number of Duke Energy customers who lost power in the state as of 4:30 p.m. Nov. 17, 2013, during that tornado outbreak.

Johnston said by Thursday morning the number still without electricity was down to around 16,000 in the Kokomo area. According to Duke Energy's online outage map, that number stood at 11,712 as of 5 p.m. Thursday.

"The tornadoes that ripped through Indiana left a trail of damage to our system, primarily in Kokomo," stated Chris Lange, Duke Energy's storm incident commander. "We're seeing significant damage, including poles and power lines that are totally gone, requiring us to completely to rebuild the lines. We will be working around the clock to restore power. Our goal is to have all customers who can receive power restored by 6 p.m. Saturday, although most will be restored to service earlier."

Johnston said the company had around 400 line workers toiling continuously to restore power — and that's not even counting the "small army" of outside contractors, including tree trimmers.

"We're doing an all-hands kind of thing," he said.

According to a press release issued Thursday by the Indiana Department of Homeland Security, power has been restored at Community Howard Regional Health and at the drinking water plant.

“More traffic signals in Kokomo are now working due to power being restored. Four-way traffic stops are still being used at five intersections,” stated the release.

Johnston said it was “common practice” to shut down entire sections of the grid when this many power lines were either down or sagging after an event such as this. He said since tornadoes were more isolated than other types of natural disasters, they were able to triage critical infrastructure such as jails and water supplies.

“We make sure those facilities are safe,” he said.

Johnston said he wanted to remind people to stay away from downed power lines, even if they looked dead.

“Consider any lines down to be live,” he said. “Lots of folks have generators and if they’re not hooked up correctly, they can back-feed.”

Any customer who has not yet reported an outage should call 800-343-3525.

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